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UNCLAS PARIS 002317

SIPDIS

BRUSSELS PASS USEU FOR AGMINCOUNSELOR
STATE FOR OES; EUR/ERA AND EBB;
STATE PASS USTR FOR MURPHY;
USDA/OS/JOHANNIS, PENN, TERPSTRA AND RAYMOND;
USDA/FAS FOR OA YOST/ROBERTS, SIMMONS/JONES;
ITP/SHEIKH/MACKE/TOM POMEROY/MIKE WOOLSEY/GREG
YOUNG;
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EU POSTS PASS TO AGRICULTURE AND ECON
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety
Meets with EFSA Executive Director

1. On April 7, 2006, USDA Under-Secretary for Food Safety Richard Raymond met with recently-appointed Executive Director of the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) Catherine Geslain-Laneelle in Paris. Ms. Geslain-Laneelle is currently Regional Director of Agriculture and Forestry for the French Ile de France region and Vice-President of EFSA Management Board. She was General-Director of Food in the Agriculture Ministry from 2000 to 2003.

2. Ms. Geslain-Laneelle explained that one of her priorities as the Executive Director of EFSA will be to improve coordination among the various food safety agencies in European Member States and EFSA, so that assessments "don't diverge" and efforts are not duplicated.

3. In addition, Ms. Geslain-Laneelle showed great interest in building cooperation and improving information sharing between European food safety services and their American counterparts in order to contribute to international risk assessment efforts. She asked for suggestions on topics to work on in cooperation with U.S. food safety services, and Under Secretary Raymond offered to share the report the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) recently prepared on the recommendations for the public in cooking temperatures for poultry, with a view to establishing a joint position to "sell" to the WHO. She agreed that this would be a positive starting point after which they could resume work on some of the more contentious issues, e.g., anti-microbial treatments.

4. Ms. Geslain-Laneelle emphasized the importance for EFSA of maintaining a completely scientific approach, citing biotech as an example. She emphasized that GMO products are safe from a scientific standpoint and that, contrary to NGO allegations, EFSA experts must sign a conflict of interest declaration and are not beholden to industry.

Stapleton